

The President's Daily Brief

23 September 1969

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

MIDDLE EAST

Repair work on the East Ghor Canal in Jordan finally began Saturday afternoon, but by the next evening the Israelis were already complaining that a number of mortar shells had landed in a kibbutz not far from the break in the canal. If incidents like this--which we would guess was the work of the fedayeen--keep up, Israeli military restraint is likely to be short-lived.

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Embassy Amman reports that the Jordanian Government is also finding it more and more difficult to control the fedayeen in the towns. Over the past few weeks, the police have refused to act in at least two cases where fedayeen killed prominent non-Arabs. Neither would they intervene in the kidnaping of a newspaper editor or in a youth riot in Amman. One important reason for the ineffectiveness of the police is the fact that most of them are Palestinians sympathetic to the fedayeen.

The government is relying increasingly on bedouin tribal elements, long a major prop of the monarchy, to take up the slack left by the police, but this does not seem to be enough. Many private citizens are said to be arming themselves and setting up their own vigilante units. The embassy believes the government must soon take firm steps to establish its sway or risk losing the backing of its traditional elements of support.

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SOVIET AFFAIRS

A Canadian Embassy official in Washington informed the Department of State last Friday that Gromyko would be returning home from the UN meeting by way of Ottawa. Later the same official stated that the Soviet foreign minister had canceled the Canadian visit because he had to be back in Moscow by 3 October.

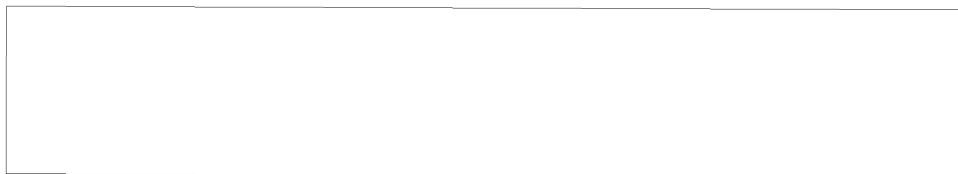
The most logical explanation for such a deadline would be a plenary session of the central committee, although we do not now have any evidence that such a meeting has been called. The last session was held in June, following the international Communist conference, and normally two are held each year. Furthermore, Sino-Soviet relations would seem to require discussion.

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Preparations are under way for another Soviet unmanned moon shot using the SL-12 booster. The mission probably will be similar to Luna-15 and could come within the next few days. Luna-15 failed in an attempted soft landing on the moon in July.

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VIETNAM



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LIBYA

Cracks are already beginning to show up in the civilian government facade set up by the military junta. Prime Minister Maghribi in particular seems to be drawing fire from several quarters; even junta chief al-Gaddafi is said to be dissatisfied with Maghribi's performance. We would expect the junta to go slowly in making changes, however, if only to avoid giving the impression that it is having trouble getting organized.

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BOLIVIA

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armed

forces commander General Ovando held a press conference yesterday at which he announced his resignation in the wake of charges by an opposition deputy that his presidential campaign is being financed by US oil companies.

Ovando took a strongly anti-US position at the press conference, claiming that the charges were an American plot to discredit him and that "the imperialists do not favor my candidacy because of my nationalist position." This line may generate the popular support he has thus far failed to attract. Ovando has been talking coup for some time, and he may view the current situation as an opening for a move that, if not putting him overtly in power, would at least install a government favorable to his candidacy.

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